

# The Library Assistant :

*The Official Journal of the Library Assistants' Association.*

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS.

**On Wednesday, March 14th**, the Association will again join the Members of the Library Association in the re-union so kindly arranged by Mr. MacAlister at the Royal Society of Medicine, 1, Wimpole Street, W. Light refreshments will be served at 7.30 p.m. As on previous occasions the proceedings will be entirely informal.

The Council of the L.A.A. again urges all who possibly can to attend this gathering, as these meetings afford very valuable opportunities for discussing the many difficulties and problems which beset us daily now. Whilst aware that leisure is limited and travelling not easy, the Council is convinced that there is greater necessity than ever for library workers to gather together periodically in order to talk over matters of moment; and the Council is equally sure that all those who do make an effort to attend are amply repaid in many ways, not least in the mental stimulus received.

## EDITORIAL.

**The Monthly Re-unions.**—The idea of a club for librarians is by no means a new one, but for various reasons the idea has never materialised. The nearest approximation we have yet seen to it was at the re-union last month, which was of an entirely different character from its predecessors. Everything was quite informal. Professional friends chatted together over a cup of coffee or a cigarette amid the most congenial surroundings, and one or two matters of current interest were discussed in the same free and easy manner. Altogether we think that, continued on similar lines, these re-unions will provide us with just the opportunity that we need for meeting one another for friendly intercourse, and for the discussion of such problems as we are confronted with from time to time in these difficult days. We are greatly indebted to Mr. MacAlister in the matter.

**A Memorial to Library Workers.**—Our readers will be glad to hear that at the last re-union the question of providing a memorial to all library workers who fall in the War was again brought forward. The forms which seem to find general favour are two: a printed record, and a mural tablet to be erected in some public building, preferably the British Museum. For our own part we should like to see both forms adopted. In the event of a printed record being prepared, we think that it should contain the names of all those who have served their King and Country at this time. We understand that the matter is to be brought before the notice of the Council of the Library Association, which body will, we feel sure, give the matter its careful and sympathetic consideration. If any of our readers have any ideas on the subject we should be glad to hear of them.

**Our Album of Honour.**—We wish to thank the librarians and relatives of our colleagues on active service who have sent us portraits during the past month. The collection is now becoming very interesting and has reached a total of about 80 photographs. May we again request the co-operation of all our friends in making this record as complete as possible. Several librarians and assistants have already helped us considerably, and we know of others who are doing their best to procure photographs for the Album. May we urge upon everyone the urgent necessity for procuring these records as quickly as possible, in order that no time may be lost in getting the volumes bound.

**The Spirit of "Carrying On."**—We have been much encouraged lately by the increased activity which is becoming evident in the ranks of our Association. Not only is the Central Association determined to "carry-on," but we learn with pleasure that the same spirit is abroad in several of the Branches. We have referred before to the virility of the West of Scotland Branch, which is fortunate enough to be in a position to arrange a definite programme of meetings. At the Annual Meeting of the Yorkshire Branch the other day the same determined spirit to "carry-on" was in evidence, while the North Western Branch, by organizing a meeting at Blackburn, has given expression to a similar spirit.

**A Training College for Librarians.**—We are in entire agreement with the writer in the current issue of the "Library World" who asks if it is not high time to found a real training college for librarians? It is high time, and we trust that some definite steps towards securing such a college will be taken in the immediate future. As a start may we suggest that a small committee be appointed consisting of members of the two professional associations instructed to go into the whole question, and to

report in, say, three months' time. Of course we cannot do more than make the suggestion, but we may have something further to say in regard to the matter next month.

**For Provincial Assistants.**—Although most of our Branches are still in a position to carry on their affairs, in one or two cases, owing to the enlistment of all the officers and many of the members, the organization is, of necessity, for the time being in abeyance. We should like to point out to members in the areas concerned, that their subscriptions should be sent direct to the Honorary Treasurer, Mr. W. G. Chambers, Public Library, Plumstead, S.E.

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### THE TRAINING OF THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.\*

By Miss FLORA YORK, Greenock Public Library.

We know many professions whose devotees "train." The teacher and other members of professional bodies go through certain courses of study to fit them for the special spheres of work to which life and inclination have called them. Now, and for many years back, the Library Assistant has ceased to be, in the eyes of the world, a sort of "Glorified Counterhand." The cry has arisen, "We must have qualified Assistants." To misuse a quotation, "The Public and Librarians demand it."

Why not? School teachers, we know, are trained. The Librarian ranks himself on the same, if not a higher plane; therefore, the assistant, as the Librarian of to-morrow should have all the advantages and chances of knowledge. The arguments that teachers are trained because they must instruct, that there have been great teachers all through the ages, Plato, Socrates and so on, we can meet with equally good weapons.

The teacher has the care of the children; to a certain extent the Librarian and his assistants have the care of the Reading Public. Their wards are drawn from the fathers and mothers of the tiny tots whom the teacher instructs, and these have wider experience and knowledge gained in the great school and play-evening before our classes; we must be trained and keep so. ground of life. We assistants cannot prepare our lessons the

Our profession is ancient also. We rank among our brothers who tended the friends we know so well and love, Richard de Bury, and before him, Gerbert, Pope Sylvester II. Listen to what Bury wrote, 700 years ago, on the treatment of

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\*A Paper read before the West of Scotland Branch, 15th Feb., 1917.

books. "Let there be mature decorum in opening and closing of volumes, that they may neither be unclasped with precipitous haste, nor thrown aside after inspection without being duly closed." Again: "It is altogether befitting the decency of a scholar that washing should without fail precede reading, as often as he returns from his meals to study, before his fingers, besmeared with grease, loosen a clasp or turn over the leaf of a book."

That man was a true Librarian. Take this as a strong argument. We walk in the footprints of the wise, and, come what may, let us be heartened in our work or disheartened, let us, when we serve these grown-up children, when a most ordinary borrower apparently sees in us most ordinary assistants, remember this. Remember that some day in some other sphere we may meet and call that Richard "Brother"; rejoice, put on the garment of the dignity of our office and train!

Reading over the Library periodicals, I find that much ink has been spilt over this very "training." The gods of our profession have thought much, written much, spoken much. How shall a novice approach the subject?

There is a proverb, "One man may bring a horse to the water, but ten men cannot make him drink." Ten Librarians cannot make an efficient Library Assistant if the assistant treats his work as "Work," without the word "Life" before it. Therefore the beginning of this Library Recipe is—"Take a willing assistant."

Nevertheless, from one standpoint, ideals are hard things to keep up in a Library, where the assistant happens to be the only junior interested in the routine, beyond the "my business" point of view. He is isolated from all the life and comradeship which the assistants in the cities enjoy. Often the other junior members are boys, who in the course of a year contemplate entering the workshop; girls who drag the work to the level of mere clerking—that profession which is akin to a High Priest's Office—"Keepers of King's Treasuries." Have you met this individual? He is called, may I say, "The Assistant in the Backwater." What would you do with him? The solution seems very easy from my vantage ground—the idea may not appeal to you—or even to practical minds be workable, yet here it is.

Get a Correspondence Column in our *Library Assistant*, or, even better, keep a record of our members outside the city. Then some of the Assistants in the Libraries here might write, say one letter in a month to those stranded ones. Let them be friendly letters or learned letters; letters in connection with

our work or the Association—but remember one thing—your first letters are to rouse a person who is “half-dead.”

Training means an all-round instruction in Library work. From the working knowledge of an indicator or open-access system, to Classification and Cataloguing; learning to deal with fines, the keeping of binding books, the making up of statistics, stock sheet entering, specifications—all this should be learnt by the assistant. The subject which I think requires more thought after Specifications—which one does not learn as a junior—is classification.

The beginner generally manages to find most books when at work in the Lending Department, because the numbers are printed plainly on their backs. Usually, a senior explains that the letters A, B, C, and so on, are class letters, but do the words convey much meaning to the timid, new person? I think not. The boy grasps the easier idea that the numbers will aid, goes blindly, mechanically on, until one day, asked for a book, whose subject is to him unfamiliar, he looks blank and fails the borrower. This may, or may not happen in city libraries. In libraries where the chief has much to do, and very young assistants compose the staff, it does happen.

Now, why not train the junior by means of books from the reserve stock? A short exercise every day, say of five minutes, would surely not put the Library machinery very much out of gear. Classification, as we know, is a bone of contention; at the earliest opportunity the assistant should see a little piece of that bone.

Its study, apart from the knowledge of the different rules, goes on for all time. The law of world progress governs it. There are subjects written of now, about which, years before, no one thought of writing. The assistant should learn his rules, the rules which govern his own Library's classification scheme; the rules which other Libraries adopt, and also be taught to remember, that recent inventions and many other factors result in new classification lands to conquer. It even has a place in cataloguing, for it comes uppermost after the author slip is finished and the subject slip commenced.

Now come the difficulties of some Library Assistants. The Assistant in the small town meets with many set backs, in this “all-round training.” The staff is small, time cannot be devoted to the teaching of one, because the Librarian has many duties. The problem faced, grows darker; if one member is withdrawn from either counter or department, the others grumble, and the experiment, having been tried, is never repeated. There is no London School of Economics for this

individual, and if, as here, you have classes for Library work, trains or hours do not always suit, and the young student gropes about with text-books, until some evening he "learns, learns in a dream."

I am not experienced enough to *dare* to suggest a remedy. A fertile imagination conjures up a Library Utopia. A "Library Board of Control"; every junior assistant furnished with a number and changed from Library to Library, so that he or she may have no opportunity to become, "one in a back-water."

The date of this Utopian Library World, is the year of the abolition of our present rate system. When the State shall realise, that to educate its children is not enough; that the gift of the knowledge of reading, once bestowed, must be fostered, by easy access to those palaces, wherein all may walk and think with the great men who lived long, long ago. Then there shall be Government Libraries, as well as Government Schools; then Librarians and their assistants shall have *their* chance. The training of each assistant shall be assured, our chiefs will have more time to devote to the extension of that training, because our Institutions shall be better staffed.

There is one subject, however, in which we can make ourselves more proficient every day, without depending much on anyone. That is Literary History. In my own study, I lay down no rules, I read for pleasure and leave the results alone. I never bother whether every little detail is gathered in, afterwards—the little points are sure to come back to the memory. In reading, at any rate, the phrase "A brain like a sieve" seems quite all right—almost a compliment—your brain should be, so that all the things that don't matter, which creep in with the ones that do, can go through. But I keep a "Year-book," mark down all the books I read in a year, then when the start of a New Year comes, I can review my reading. If I read too much Biography and not much Poetry, I correct this. Thus I do not lose my pleasure in Poetry, or risk, like Darwin, when he buried himself in Science, my love of Shakespeare. If you read something like this, you have a better chance of passing an examination, than a mere cram.

"Sire, why are you so wise?" questioned an Eastern youth of a Philosopher. "My son, I was not afraid to ask," was the reply. So must it be with Library Assistants. We should not fear to ask concerning the difficulties we meet in our profession, and when one of us, perhaps, reaches the Mecca of every Library Assistant's dream—"A Chief's position"—let us not be afraid "to instruct."

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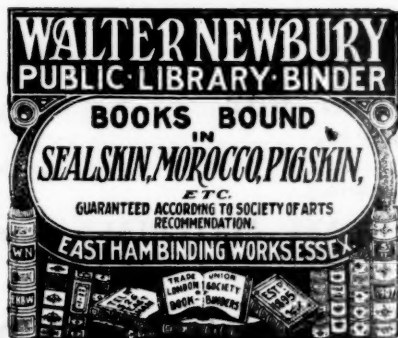
## Library Association.

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### LITERARY HISTORY.

The Special Period in English Literary History set for the Examination to be held in May, 1918, is 1840-1870.

## East Ham Bookbinding Works,



Plashet Lane and Elizabeth Road, East Ham, Essex.

## ALBUM OF HONOUR.

The Association is anxious to secure

### PHOTOGRAPHS

(Preferably carbon or platinotype prints)

Of all Library Workers on Active Service. Also

### NEWSPAPER AND OTHER CUTTINGS, PHOTOGRAPHS OF MEMORIALS,

And any other material which can be incorporated in the Album of Honour, now being compiled.

Please send all material to:

MR. H. A. SHARP,  
Central Library,  
Town Hall,  
Croydon.



# **MONTHLY RE-UNION.**

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## **The NEXT RE-UNION**

**For Library Workers,**

WILL BE HELD AT

**THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF MEDICINE**

1, WIMPOLE STREET, W.,

**On WEDNESDAY, 14th MARCH, 1917.**

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Light Refreshments will be served at **7.30 p.m.**

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This Meeting will take the place of the ordinary Monthly Meeting  
of the Library Assistants' Association.

**ALL LIBRARY WORKERS ARE CORDIALLY INVITED.**

"I hold every man a debtor to his profession, from the which, as men do of course seek to receive countenance and profit, so ought they of duty to endeavour themselves by way of amends to be a help and an ornament thereunto."—FRANCIS BACON, BARON VERULAM.

# ARE YOU HELPING?

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## The Library Assistants' Association

has done much good work for its Members and for LIBRARIANSHIP GENERALLY in the past. It has stimulated individual effort towards increased efficiency; it has always urged the further development of the Public Library Movement; it has stood for better conditions and has claimed a **STANDING FOR THE PROFESSION**. At the moment the Association is extending its influences and work, and needs the support and co-operation of all who are qualified for Membership; difficult problems lie ahead which can only be faced effectually by a strong Association.

### YOU CAN DO SOMETHING.

You can quicken interest in your own vicinity. You can get new Members, or secure subscribers to "THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT." Perhaps you can obtain advertisements for "The Library Assistant."

### WILL YOU TRY TO DO SOMETHING

for your Association? And will you try now? Remember that the L.A.A. was established TWENTY-ONE YEARS AGO, and holds a recognized position. It is no new venture with its way to make.

Any information you may need will be gladly supplied by the *Hon. Secretary*, BROMLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY, BRUNSWICK ROAD, POPLAR, LONDON, E.

### L.A.A. ROLL OF HONOUR (continued).

**Sheffield :** B. BELCH (King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry); F. BROADHURST (York and Lancaster Regiment); F. GOMERSALL (Army Veterinary Corps); \*H. W. MARR (Duke of Wellington's Regiment); \*EDGAR OSBORNE (London Scottish); S. POLLARD (Army Service Corps); J. W. SHIRT (Bedfordshire Regiment); J. W. STÉELE (R.F.A.) H. VALANTINE (York and Lancaster Regiment).

**Wandsworth (Past and Present Members of the Staff) :** R. G. AUSTIN (10th Batt., East Surrey Regiment); S. BASTIN (R.A.M.C.); J. A. BRIGHT (3rd Batt., East Surrey Regiment); W. J. CLARK (12th County of London); R. COOPER (Dorset Yeomanry); L. H. COUSINS (R.A.M.C.); R. CRUTTENDEN (2nd Lieut., Machine Gun Corps); C. P. P. DAVIS (R.F.A.); H. DAVIS (13th Batt., East Surrey Regiment); T. DAVIS (Royal Fusiliers); A. FREEMAN (A.S.C.); G. R. GATLAND (R.A.M.C.); R. C. GOLDSWORTHY (King's Royal Rifles); A. L. HIDER ( ); H. E. ILOTT (R.A.M.C.); F. MARRIOTT ( ); E. MENDHAM (23rd Batt., East Surrey Regiment); S. C. Norman (A.S.C.); A. V. PANKHURST (King's Royal Rifles); F. H. WHITELAND (Royal Navy).

**Woolwich :** D. D. NICHOLS (Royal Horse Artillery); P. W. RAINBOW (A.S.C.).

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### PROMOTIONS.

**A. Burton**, of the Sheffield Public Libraries, has been promoted to the rank of sergeant. King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.

\***R. W. Lynn**, of the Sunderland Public Libraries, has been promoted to the rank of lance-corporal, Machine Gun Corps, Heavy Section ("Tanks").

**A. Middleton**, of the Sheffield Public Libraries, has been promoted to the rank of lance-corporal, Royal Scots Fusiliers.

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### MISSING.

We regret to announce that \*Sergeant **R. E. Smither**, of the Brighton Public Library, has been reported "missing."

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### KILLED IN ACTION.

We are sorry to learn that Private **R. T. Mayrick** (9th Batt., E. Surrey Regiment), of the Wandsworth Public Libraries, was reported killed in action in September, 1915.

\* Member, L.A.A.

## NATIONAL FREE LIBRARY FOR THE BLIND.

One of the chief events of the past year in the World of the Blind is the attainment of a National Free Library of embossed literature and music. For years past the Committee of the National Library for the Blind (18, Tufton Street, Westminster, London), have been working towards this ideal, but they felt that, until they could combine the privileges of free reading with an adequate provision of books, the moment for the final step had not come.

This fine library of over 27,000 volumes of literature and 5,000 volumes of music has now been declared free of all charge save that of carriage to every blind reader in the United Kingdom. It includes sections of Moon Type books, Esperanto and Grade III books are obtained on loan from Paris. This development has been made possible partly by the generous help of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust in providing fine and ample premises for the work (though this grant has not increased the income of the Library) and partly by the greater interest taken by the general public.

It is hoped that Institutions and Societies for the Blind as well as Public Libraries will continue to co-operate with and support financially the National Library, as without such help from all parts of the country it will be impossible to maintain the Library at its present high level of efficiency.

To quote from the circular sent to readers announcing that the Library is free the Committee only beg "for three things on behalf of your National Library :

1. That you will help us to maintain an efficient free service by the prompt return of the books, the clear statement of your wishes, and a ready compliance with our few rules, which are made only for the greatest good of our readers, and never to save trouble at the Library.

2. That you will always let me know of any failure on our part, and never keep any criticism from us.

3. That you will regard the Library as your own possession, and help it financially if you can, or by interesting your friends if you cannot, as we must depend in future entirely on voluntary subscriptions and donations.

With this co-operation on the part of our readers, and a ready exchange of views between them and us, we can face the future without fear, and rejoice in the full development of the National Library for the Blind."

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## PROCEEDINGS.

### THE FEBRUARY RE-UNION.

By kind invitation of Mr. J. Y. W. MacAlister, a re-union for library workers was held at the Royal Society of Medicine on Wednesday, 14th February. Light refreshments were provided, and the first part of the

evening was pleasantly spent in conversation with professional friends. Later, there was an informal discussion on several library questions of the moment. Mr. Carter (Kingston) explained briefly his Roll of Honour for the town, which is limited to those who actually fall in the war. The particulars are contained on specially printed forms, which are obtainable at the library. In the course of the discussion we learned that at least two other such Rolls are being prepared by Library Authorities. The most ambitious scheme is at Blackburn, where it is proposed to enrol all who serve with the colours. At Croydon a Roll had just been started in which it is proposed to include: (a) those who fall, (b) the wounded, (c) those who gain military honours.

The question of providing a permanent memorial to those library workers who may fall was again discussed. In addition to the Album of Honour now being compiled by the L.A.A., Mr. Tedder hoped that it would be possible to have some complete printed record of all those who have served their country in the Great War. The idea of providing a mural tablet to the memory of the fallen, to be erected in some large public building such as the British Museum, was again brought forward, and seemed to find general favour.

The desirability of adopting a standard system of keeping library statistics was also introduced.

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#### WEST OF SCOTLAND BRANCH.

The third meeting of the second session was held in the Glasgow High School on Thursday, 18th January, 1917, when Mr. A. Henderson, of Glasgow University Library, delivered a lecture on "Paper, Pens and Ink: an Historical Sketch." The President of the branch, Mr. W. Jno. Phillips, presided. After briefly introducing his subject, the Lecturer said that the earliest paper was made from the Egyptian plant, *Cyperus Papyrus*. It was called papy by the Egyptians and biblos by the Greeks, and from these names we get our English words, paper and bible. The papyrus paper was made from the interior of the stalk of the plant, which was cut into thin slices. This kind of paper continued in use till the 12th century, when parchment and paper made of rags were introduced. But the first paper-maker was an insect. The wasp had been busy thousands of years before this, making its nest from dry wood, and it still continues to saw, masticate, and work into paste the woody fibres it selects. Like the wasp, the Chinese keep to their antiquated methods of making paper from the bamboo, mulberry, elm and rice-paper plants. In modern paper-making, however, rags are the chief ingredient. The different ways of making paper were then graphically described by the lecturer. The instruments used for writing were adapted to the material on which they were to be employed. The stile made of iron, brass, ivory, bone or wood, was found more convenient for writing on waxed tablets. The Babylonians and Assyrians used a stile with a square end, which made the well-known cuneiform characters. After reeds had been in common use, the goose quill became fashionable. Its invention dates from the 4th century, and it remained in use till the second half of the 19th century. The ink used by the ancients was generally black. It was obtained from the ink sac of the sepia or cuttle-fish. The making of modern ink was then fully described. The lecture was a highly instructive one. Diagrams and examples of quills, and the early methods of cutting these, besides some interesting and amusing experiments with various kinds of sympathetic ink, were a few of the striking features. In addition, the lecture was illustrated by a large number of beautiful slides. Dr. Milligan, Professor of Biblical Criticism, lending a number illustrating the papyrus and ancient

writings, and Messrs. Macniven and Cameron supplied lantern illustrations of their pen factory. On the motion of the President, Mr. Henderson was cordially thanked for his interesting lecture. The Secretary, Mr. H. Cohen, moved a vote of thanks to Glasgow School Board and the High School authorities for so kindly putting the hall and lantern at the disposal of the branch.

## YORKSHIRE BRANCH.

### TENTH ANNUAL REPORT.

Your Committee, in submitting the tenth Annual Report, have to regret another lean year, due entirely to the war, and its restrictions upon our various activities. Two meetings only have been held since last January.

On March 30th a Meeting was held in Bradford and attended by over thirty members and friends. The arrangements included a visit to the Bolling Hall Museum, when, under the guidance of Mr. Butler Wood, Chief Librarian of Bradford, an inspection was made of the historical building and its contents. Afterwards Miss Hummerston gave a lecture on her work as Story-Teller at the Leeds Public Libraries, which brought forth an interesting discussion.

On June 21st the Summer Meeting took the form of a ramble among Bronte associations, thirty-two members and friends taking part. It was a highly successful outing and embraced a visit to the birthplace of the Brontes, at Thornton, a pleasant walk over Ogden Moors, a visit to Haworth Church, the Bronte Museum, and various places intimately associated with the Bronte family, and Bronte writings.

### MEMBERSHIP.

We commenced the year with a membership of 84, but during the last twelve months 9 members have either resigned or left the service, consequently at the present moment there is a membership of 75. Of these, 22 have joined His Majesty's Forces, leaving a working membership of 53.

### TREASURER'S REPORT.

Perhaps the most satisfactory feature of the report is the financial statement. Thanks to the wise husbanding of our resources by the Treasurer, Mr. Proctor, there is a balance in hand of £2 5s. 9d.

### PERSONAL.

During the year our President, Mr. G. W. Strother was nominated for the Presidency of the parent association, an honour already long overdue, but he generously withdrew his name to save an election.

We have to deplore the loss of one of our members who has given his life in the great war. David Strachan brought honour to the Branch, and to the library service generally by his rapid rise to the rank of Captain in the West Yorkshire Regiment. As a member of the L.A.A. he took an active part in the affairs of our Branch: was at one time on the Committee, and has given papers on various phases of his work. His point of view in a discussion was always novel and interesting. As a consequence of being blown up in a trench he developed brain fever, which proved fatal, and he died in Leeds hospital. His loss will be keenly felt by all those who came under the influence of his almost boyish enthusiasm, and his sunny disposition. And in the words of our President "There is a great sadness in the cutting off of a career which seemed to have so many possibilities in it."

## OUR LIBRARY.

LANGE, F. W. T. **BOOKS ON THE GREAT WAR**: an annotated bibliography of literature issued during the European conflict. Pref.; by R. A. Peddie. Vol. 4. 8+199 pp. 9½ in. × 6 in. 1916. Grafton & Co. 7s. 6d. net. Cloth.

Mr. Lange is to be congratulated upon the result of his labours in the volume of this invaluable bibliography just published, and the thanks of all librarians and historians are due to him for his efforts. The present volume is an attempt to list all printed literature not previously recorded, in any way relative to the War which has appeared in this country and in America down to the end of April, 1916. All the important foreign publications are also included.

The literature recorded is of a rather different nature from that contained in the earlier volumes. The long months of trench warfare "has resulted in a crop of personal reminiscences from professional and amateur journalists.

Discussions of the Dardanelles and Gallipoli operations are beginning, and we may expect to see this section very considerably enlarged in the near future."—(*Pref.*) "The discussion on the causes of the War is beginning to die down, . . . and the tendency of the later works is rather an attempt to analyse the motives of the statesmen and monarchs concerned from a study of their respective diplomatic notes. The topics on which literature of the greatest importance is appearing are the possible terms of peace, and the economic reconstruction of Europe."—(*Ibid.*)

The entries are arranged in a classified order, and are accompanied by explanatory notes when necessary. Particulars of pagination, publishers, and prices are also given. There is an extensive subject index at the commencement of the volume, and at the end is a very full author index. As the war draws nearer to an end, it seems to us more than ever necessary that every Reference Library should possess a copy of this important work, which will form a record of the mass of material that has poured forth from the world's printing presses, but much of which will be lost in a few years' time.

STEPHEN, G. A. **Three Centuries of a City Library**: an historical and descriptive account of the Norwich Public Library Established in 1608, and the Present Public Library Opened in 1857. 4 + 86 pp. 6 il. 10 in. × 6 in. Boards (cl. back). 1917. Norwich. The Public Library Committee.

In the Eastern counties the Public Library movement has never developed so thoroughly as in the northern and midland districts, and it may therefore come as a surprise to many to learn that the earliest municipal libraries are to be found in East Anglia. A Town Library was founded in Ipswich in 1612, but Norwich possessed this luxury four years earlier. In addition to this honour the city claims to have been the first to adopt the Public Library Act, that known as Ewart's Act of 1850. The rate-limit fixed

by this pioneer Act was  $\frac{1}{2}$ d., hence several years elapsed before Norwich could reap material advantage from its public spirit. The foundation stone of the new building was laid in 1854 and the institution opened for public use in March, 1857. Thus the "Diamond Jubilee" will be celebrated this month, and in commemoration of this notable event, Mr. G. A. Stephen, F.L.A., the City Librarian, has written an interesting account of the old and the modern libraries, published by the Norwich Library Committee under the above title. The edition is limited to 300 copies and the published price is 3s.; certainly a cheap book under present conditions.

The library of 1608 was mainly a theological one "for the use of the preachers," and the share of the corporation was confined to the provision of accommodation in the porch of St. Andrew's Hall, and the making of regulations. The supply of books depended entirely upon voluntary contributions, Alderman Sir John Pettus starting with a donation of 15 volumes. In 1656 the Common Council ordained new articles for the administration of the library, and the earliest minute-book dates from that year. The subscription was fixed at 1s. per quarter, plus a proportion of any extra necessary expenditure, and the collection was placed under the care of a "Library keeper" elected by the subscribers, each subscriber serving in rotation and gratuitously. An "Under-keeper" was appointed at a salary defrayed from the subscriptions: his income cannot have been lavish. The first printed catalogue was published in 1706 and consisted of 38 pp. The cost was £2 16s. 3d. and, like many catalogues to-day, it resulted in a loss to the library. In 1709 there was still 14s. 3d. owing to the compiler, and to meet this a duplicate book was sold! The second edition, printed in 1732, was likewise an author-catalogue, enlarged to 54 pp.

The library remained located at St. Andrew's Hall until 1801, and after many vicissitudes it returned to the control of the corporation in 1862; since that time it has been housed at the present Public Library. It is fortunate in still possessing many literary treasures, such as 13th and 15th Century MSS., including a Wycliffe translation of the O. T. formerly owned by Sir James Boleyn. The early printed books include 28 incunabula, four from English presses and of great rarity. All these are fully described by Mr. Stephen.

The history of the Public Library is given in the second part of the present book. As already stated, the Act was adopted in 1850 and the foundation stone laid in 1854. Many delays, financial and otherwise, followed, and the library was not ready for opening until March, 1857. The initial stock was about 3,000 vols., and ten years later had only increased to 4,400. So the library struggled on, greatly hampered by loan repayments. In 1888 the stock had advanced to 16,500, and in 1894 to over 30,000. But greater developments followed the appointment of Mr. Stephen in 1911, and to him is due the important position which Norwich now holds among the public libraries of this country. Mr. Stephen found the Norwich Library in a parlous state, owing to many years of indifferent management and lack of proper organisation. It must have meant many weary months of uphill fighting for him to bring his new command up to his high ideal of modern requirements, and every praise is due to him for his success. Since the spade-work was completed, Mr. Stephen has been busy with several bibliographical brochures and similar work, including the present volume. Most of us have felt the change of conditions during the last two years: the depleted staffs and the increased pressure for the few who remain at the post of duty. Norwich, like other libraries, has given its quota to the military machine, and we cannot but marvel how, in face of these great difficulties, Mr. Stephen has found time and opportunity to complete the interesting volume now added to our L.A.A. Library.

BURIENSIS.